



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

We're excited to be heading to Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico this week for AOT's 13th Arizona Showcase event!

With the Arizona Showcase, travel agents, tour operators, media representatives and the public will experience an energetic fashion show featuring local society members as models. The attendees will also receive lots of great information from exhibitors as well as from the many destination marketing organizations that will be on hand to spotlight their visitor destination. More than 800 participants are expected to participate.

For AOT, the Arizona Showcase is an incredible event that plays a vital role in our marketing efforts to the Mexican visitor. AOT and many of our statewide industry partners have been working diligently to promote Arizona as a vibrant destination for Mexican visitors, since this visitor segment is our number one international market and tremendously important to Arizona.

Our goal is to inform all of the attendees of the wonderful travel experiences they can have in Arizona, including outdoor adventures, invigorating arts and culture, luxurious resorts, rejuvenating spas, championship golf courses, fine dining options and a wide-selection of shopping opportunities!

See you in Hermosillo!

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

New Updates to AOT's Research Web site!

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [National, Regional, Arizona Lodging August 2011](#)
- [County Lodging August 2011](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Melissa Elkins, Research Manager, at 602-364-3716 or via e-mail at melkins@azot.gov.

Upcoming Events & Activities

[Arizona Showcase](#)

Date: October 6

Location: Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico

[Canada Trade Mission - East](#)

Date: October 11 – 14

Location: Montreal, QB and Winnipeg, MB

[Celebrate the Centennial: Capital Arizona Press Trip](#)

Date: October 24 – 29

Location: Prescott, Tucson and Phoenix

Industry News

First Bi-Annual CALA Festival Officially Begins September 2011

Over the course of the two-month valley-wide celebration, audiences and participants will enjoy the vibrant artistic, musical and culinary offerings of the regional Latino community through various exhibits, concerts, street fairs and more. CALA Alliance is an Arizona community-based organization dedicated to educating and inspiring all Arizonans about the richness of our Latino cultural heritage. Through festivals, performances, exhibits, in-school activities, food, music and events, we will all share in the joy and beauty of the cultural life of the Americas. The life we live throughout Arizona. Anchored by a bi-annual arts and cultural festival, Celebración Artística de las Américas (CALA), will create shared arts experiences that encourage cultural understanding between people of the Americas. The inaugural CALA Festival will take place from September 14 through November 16, 2011, coinciding with Arizona's centennial celebration. For more information, visit www.calaalliance.org.

U.S. Travel Supports Bill to Increase Efficiency of U.S. Visa Process

The U.S. Travel Association announced its support for new legislation that would create U.S. jobs by increasing international travel to America. Introduced by Congressman Joe Heck (R-NV), H.R. 3039, the “Welcoming Business Travelers and Tourists to America Act of 2011” will address that are currently discouraging international visitors from doing business and traveling here.

“Increasing travel to the United States is the most effective form of economic stimulus, and we can create more than a million jobs by reforming our visa system and welcoming more international travelers to the U.S.,” said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “The travel industry has strongly advocated for visa reform legislation such as the ‘Welcoming Business Travelers and Tourists to America Act of 2011,’ and we commend Congressman Heck for introducing this important legislation. We look forward to working with other members of the House to gain support for its passage.”

A U.S. Travel Association survey of 1,500 travelers from Brazil, China and India demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of travelers found the U.S. a difficult place to visit. Indeed, this shows the complexities travelers from those countries experience when applying for a U.S. visa. Among the key highlights of the bill is a 12-day visa processing standard and the implementation of a videoconferencing pilot for visa interviews.

While the State Department currently has a goal of interviewing all visa applicants within 30 days of their application submission, it has failed to meet this performance standard in key markets— a problem that continues to grow as demand rises. Heck’s legislation sets a 12-day processing standard and directs the Secretary of State to use nonimmigrant visa fees to hire foreign service consular officers in China, Brazil and India to meet that standard.

Travelers who do not live in a city where a U.S. consulate is located must incur hundreds or thousands of dollars in expenses to complete a mandatory face-to-face interview. The lack of accessibility to consular offices is an issue in China, Brazil and India. In fact, there are 27 cities in China and eight in India with more than two million inhabitants that do not have a U.S. visa processing center. The bill directs the Secretary of State to implement a visa videoconferencing pilot program for conducting visa interviews.

Since 2000, long-haul arrivals to the U.S. have increased by less than two percent, from nearly 26 million to 26.4 million in 2010, despite a worldwide increase of 60 million long-haul travelers over the same decade. Between 2000 and 2010, the United States’ share of global long-haul travel fell from 17 percent to just 12.4 percent. Recapturing America’s historic share of worldwide overseas travel would create up to an additional 1.3 million U.S. jobs by 2020 compared with 2010 and produce \$859 billion in cumulative additional economic output. For more information, visit www.ustravel.org. (*Travel Industry Wire, September 27*)

What Business Travelers Want from Hotels when it comes to Mobile

The findings of a new Sabre study are great news for hotel marketers looking to grow their business through mobile: not only do the majority of respondents want to receive location-specific offers at their destinations, but more than two thirds also want to use their mobile devices to shop and book hotels.

Last month, Sabre Travel Network, released some revealing results from a survey they conducted on mobile use among business travelers. In short, the findings were great news for hotel marketers looking to grow their business through this channel: not only do the majority of respondents want to receive location-specific offers at their destinations, but more than two thirds also want to use their mobile devices to shop and book hotels.

Here are a few more of the survey's findings:

- 72 percent of business travelers are interested in the ability to view hotels on a map using their mobile devices, an increase of 26 percent from 2009.
- 47 percent of business travelers use their Smartphone daily to view or receive advertisements, a 95 percent increase from 2009.
- 66 percent of respondents reported interest in the ability to add a hotel reservation to an existing itinerary using their mobile devices. (*Travel Daily News, September 29*)

Six Trends Changing the Hotel Industry

Pump bottle on the shower wall or individual shampoos and lotions you can take home? Luxurious tub for a self-indulgent bath or no tub at all? Here are some details on six hotel trends bubbling up in the industry right now, and how they affect your stay.

Increasing fees: Your hotel bill may include some unpleasant surprises. Not just the usual \$20-a-day resort and amenity fee, which you pay whether or not you use the tennis courts and pool complex, but how about a required \$12 housekeeping surcharge or a fee for storing your luggage in the lobby?

Total fees and surcharges collected by U.S. hotels are increasing from \$1.7 billion in 2010 to a record \$1.8 billion in 2011, according to new research from Bjorn Hanson, dean of New York University's Preston Robert Tisch Center for Hospitality and Sports Management. Hanson recommends that consumers ask when getting a rate for a hotel what if any requisite fees will be added to the bill. If you're booking online, you may have to hunt around the listing to see what might be added to the quoted rate in addition to taxes. (*Hotel Marketing, September 26*)

Social Media Marketing More Important for Independent Hotels

User generated content is much more likely to affect an individual property booking than a large resort reservation. UGC also significantly affects those booking a holiday to a new destination rather than those returning to the same place.

Assessing the utility of UGC from consumers' perspective in their travel buying cycle at this juncture, Gilles Granger, Founder & CEO, Vinivi says, "UGC is used at key decision making moments in the buying cycle. If you are looking at destination UGC (inspirational), it will appear in the early stage (where did my friend go to? Where others are advising me to go?). If you are looking at hotels / properties, UGC comes in the decision making, therefore very close to the basket confirmation (Customer question: Is this place really as good as the OTA says it is? Do I know anyone who did go there?)."

"Apparently 90 percent of online consumers trust recommendations from people they know; 70 percent trust people they don't know and only 14 percent trust advertisers. It's clear that UGC is fast becoming the number one source of reference material for consumers before booking their

holiday. On Qype, we have over 1.9 million reviews on everything from underground bars in Berlin, afternoon tea shops in London to the best budget hotels in Barcelona, and every month 22 million people are using the site and reading other people's opinions," Richard Dennys, CMO, Qype told EyeforTravel's Ritesh Gupta. (*Hotel Marketing, September 27*)

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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